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OWEN

MORMONS

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25th Congress, 3d Session.

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MORMONS.

MEMORIAL

OF

EPHRAIM OWEN, Jr.,

Late of Green county, Indiana, now of Davis county, Missouri,

Asking of Congress to afford protection to the people called Mormons, in the enjoyment of their civil rights as citizens of the United States; and complaining of loss of property, &c.

December 20, 1838.

Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, and ordered to be printed.

To the Representatives of the people in Congress assembled:

We humbly present a brief sketch of the Mormon difficulties in the West. Passing by the unjustifiable and unprecedented expulsion of this people from the counties of Jackson and Clay, of which scenes the writer was not an eye-witness, we will commence our story with the present difficulties, prefacing it with a short sketch of the situation in which the writer found them about the last of June, 1838, on their expulsion from Clay county. It was stipulated that they should settle in the territory north of Ray county: they commenced their settlements there in the autumn of 1836. The immense emigration from the East, together with those driven from Clay county, soon filled up the habitable country on the waters of Shoal and Goose creeks, and from a barren waste it soon looked like a garden-place. On the above date they commenced their settlement on Grand river, in Davis county, about twenty-five miles from Far West, Caldwell county. The writer was amongst the first who emigrated to and settled in that place. The citizens of Davis county made no objection to the Mormons settling amongst them, but, on the contrary, said (as the writer can witness) that they were willing they should settle amongst them; they said, in times past they had objections, but were now satisfied that the reports of the bad character of the Mormons were false. The election was approaching, and candidates as usual were busily employed in electioneering. They were frequently in the new Mormon town, and, as usual on such occasions, were willing to make any promises or give any pledges required of them. Unfortunately, there were more candidates than vacant offices; consequently, some must go to bed without a full supper of the people's suffrages. Amongst the candidates for the Legislature was one William Peningston, colonel commandant of the Davis-county

Thomas Allen, print.

militia; he, from the part he had before acted towards this people, began to fear that he would not get their votes. In order to remove all objections from their minds as to voting for him, he had been very friendly, attending many of their meetings, and sanctioning every thing that was said or done. His last resort was to prevent them from voting for his opponent, a Mr. Williams. To effect this, he made a very inflammatory speech on the morning of the election, in order to raise an excitement, and prevent, if possible, the Mormons from coming to the polls. This speech raised an affray between the citizens (as they term themselves) and the Mormons, in which there were several men wounded, and some of the Mormons fled to save their lives. The report was carried the next morning, by two men, who did not belong to the Mormon society, to Far West, that there were two Mormons left dead on the field of battle, and the adverse party would not suffer their friends to bury them. This naturally raised an excitement amongst the citizens of that place; thirty or forty men immediately started for Davis county, to force, if necessary, the interment of their friends. On their arrival, they found the rumor false; but there was a great excitement: men were collected in force around the groceries, drinking and swearing vengeance against the Mormons. They thought it necessary to take some steps to secure the public tranquillity, which gave great umbrage to some of the would-be honorable citizens of Davis county; but of the excitement which was kept up by them we will not at present speak. Judge King and General Atchinson becoming acquainted with the difficulties existing in Davis county, nobly stepped forward, and, as the Mormons fondly hoped, put a stop to further difficulties. No sooner were the noble-hearted King and Atchinson gone, than the disaffected and heartless Davis-county rabble were at work to raise excitement. This they undertook, by removing their families from the neighborhood of the Mormons; collecting them in the borders of Livingston county; sending letters and messengers to the neighboring counties, stating that the Mormons were driving women and children from their homes, taking possession of their corn-fields, and threatening slaughter and devastation to every thing in their course, and calling on them, for God's sake, and for the sake of every thing held dear by freemen, to come and help them! This soon had the desired effect: numbers were speedily collected at Millport, seven miles from the Mormon town, for the purpose of sacking the same, and killing or expelling the inhabitants. The Mormons took the alarm, and began to importune those public-spirited men, King and Atchinson, for relief. Meanwhile the militia were raising and organizing; the Mormon town was kept in a continual state of alarm by the mob, whose forces were daily augmenting, and whose vituperous breath was hourly sending forth threats of death and destruction of property to the Mormons. The writer of this sketch, in the midst of this state of alarm and confusion, while riding unarmed and peaceably along the public highway, was suddenly stopped by five ruffians, (a part of the mob,) suddenly springing up from amongst the bushes by the way side. One, who appeared to be the commander, ordered him to halt and dismount; which order he having no disposition to obey, commenced wheeling his horse for a retreat; this being perceived, the same voice gave orders to fire—bring him down; which order was promptly obeyed by three of the five men firing at the distance of fifteen or twenty feet; but the writer happily escaped their balls, by having the presence of mind to watch their rifles, and, at the time of bringing

them to the level, swinging himself in his stirrups to the opposite side of his horse. Atchinson at length arrived with 500 militia, and apparently put a stop to this alarming state of affairs. The Missourians, as they are called, acknowledged themselves thwarted in their plans of driving out the Mormons, and said that themselves would leave the county. At this time there was an Indian alarm artfully raised, and orders issued by the Governor for raising 5,000 minute-men for any emergency. They (the Davis-county people) had bound themselves with a solemn oath and covenant that they would either drive the Mormons or leave the county themselves. They now commenced selling to the Mormons, and but a short time had elapsed ere the Mormons had bought out half the citizens of the county. Meanwhile, they were gathering against De Witt, a small Mormon settlement at the mouth of Grand river, in Carroll county; they besieged this place with about 400 men; the Mormons finally surrendered on condition that they should be permitted to join the Mormon settlements up Grand river.

No sooner had the news reached Davis county of the surrender of De Witt, than the committee of said county withdrew from the Mormon town, declining to make any more sales, which they had been daily making before. The inhabitants began to act the old tragedy of moving off their families, and sending their exciting messengers and letters abroad, saying "The Mormons have driven us from our homes, taken possession of our corn-fields, burnt our houses, and in some instances murdered women and children!" The Mormons were aware of the design, which was to create an excitement, gather a force, and drive them from their homes. Application, it was said, was made to the Governor to interpose his authority and stop their mad career. (Of this the writer has no positive knowledge, but believes it to be a fact.) The Governor replied that he could do nothing for them; that he had already put the State to a vast expense, and the Mormons must help themselves. Brigadier General Parks came up to the Mormon town, in Davis county, and told the leaders in that place that they must take care of themselves, as the militia were no longer willing to be at any trouble in defending them. Colonel G. M. Hinkle asked a written permit to raise troops in Caldwell county, if necessary, to defend themselves against a mob; this General Parks declined giving, but promised that if he should be under the necessity of calling them out, he would then give him a permit, which would secure him against future difficulty. Thus the Mormons found themselves left to themselves, compelled to defend themselves by themselves, or submit to a merciless, lawless, heartless set of desperadoes, to be murdered, smitten, and driven at their pleasure. Learning by a prisoner who had made his escape that the mob were encamped with 100 men and a six-pounder about ten miles off, it was thought best to dislodge them before they had time to collect any more forces. For this purpose there were 100 cavalry sent to reconnoitre their camp, and, if possible, bring in the cannon. They soon discovered and put them to flight, and returned with the cannon. Shortly afterwards it was discovered that there were troops hovering on the southern borders of Caldwell county; they commenced driving some Mormon families from their houses, and burning the same. They, too, were supposed to be of a mob, as who could have thought any thing else? The authorities had said to the Mormons, "Defend yourselves; the militia are unwilling to do any thing for you." Neither had the Mormons ever heard

a hint of the raising the militia. But this was a part of their deep-laid plan, to have the militia lying on the Mormon frontier, and make them believe they were a mob; and thus draw them to an attack, that they might have a lawful pretext to call out the forces of the State to expel the Mormons, as they knew the Mormons would not willingly come in contact with the militia.

However, this company paid dearly for their temerity; the Mormons, supposing them to be a mob, went down with sixty cavalry to learn their intentions; when they arrived near the outpost, they were fired upon and one of the Mormons wounded. This was taken on their part as a signal for a general action. They continued their course towards the camp; the other party formed a line of battle behind their friends, and opened a brisk fire on the Mormons, who formed themselves in line of battle, and returned the fire. A fierce engagement ensued, which was ended, it was said, with the almost entire destruction of Bogard's company. No sooner had this transaction taken place, but away they went to the Governor, with news that the Mormons had attacked and cut to pieces Bogard's company of militia, while defending the frontier of Ray county. The Governor issued an order for the 5,000 militia, raised, as it was said, for Indian emergencies, to march immediately on Far West, and issued his humane order to expel or exterminate the Mormons. General Atchinson, like a man of humanity, honor, and dignity, on receiving the Governor's order, resigned his command, and retired in disgust. Far West, the Mormon town, was now invested by a force of 3,960 men, which soon increased to over 5,000, while the Mormon force amounted to 500. The Governor's order was read to the Mormon leaders, and they surrendered themselves to the Governor's forces, saying that they only intended to defend themselves against mobs, and were willing to submit to the militia; and if they had transgressed any law, they were willing to be tried by that law. The Mormons also surrendered their arms. Thus about 5,000 souls became prisoners, with orders to leave the State of Missouri, whither they had emigrated for the purpose of becoming permanent citizens. They had bought land from the Government in Jackson county, from which they had been expelled five years without redress. They had purchased in the counties of Caldwell, Ray, Clay, Clinton, and Davis, $200,000 worth of land from the Government; their improvements were worth $1,000,000; their loss, in the destruction of crops and cattle, will amount to $100,000; their loss in arms, which were necessary to defend themelves against the Indians, will amount to $12,000. It is also reported that they lost $20,000 worth of horses and saddles: of this the writer has no correct knowledge, having left the country a few days after the surrender. The aggregate loss may be estimated at $1,332,000. Thus we have given a short but correct statement of facts, the most of which passed under our own observation. Comment is deemed to be unnecessary—they speak volumes for themselves. Free citizens of the United States driven from their peaceful homes—homes which they had purchased from the Government with their own money, for the purpose of supporting their helpless women and children; and they, with their women and children turned out naked and destitute, without money, without property or friends: with orders to leave the free State of Missouri, to go they know not whither. The State of Missouri says, by this measure, that they are dangerous citizens; con-

sequently, the other States will not be willing to receive them. What is to be done? The subject calls loudly for investigation, and the Mormon grievances for redress. Is there no voice that can be raised in behalf of suffering and bleeding humanity? Must helpless women and children be turned out naked in the world to beg their bread? Where is the spirit of our fathers, who, in their patriotism, won the battles of the Revolution, and secured liberty and independence to their offspring? Secured, did I say? No! I will recall the expression, and never utter it more, until I am restored to the rights and privileges of a freeman—never, while I know that thousands of souls, the offspring of those generous fathers who won liberty for themselves, and hoped to entail it to their posterity, are held in more bitter bondage than the sable sons of Africa, in the midst of a nation whose institutions are thought to be the best that ever graced the annals of time.

This is sent to the Congress of the United States, that they may have the truth fairly before them. It is also intended as the humble memorial of this people, asking the council of the nation to do them that justice which has been hitherto denied them by the State of Missouri. We would represent to you, that our property, our liberty, yea, our sacred all, are gone, and we are ordered to leave the State of Missouri. We have nothing left wherewith to transport ourselves, nor do we know whither to go; therefore we throw ourselves on the mercy of Congress. We are the sons of those generous sires, who, by a sacrifice of their lives and fortunes, secured to you the privilege of sitting in council. Many of us have served in the armies of our country, and assisted in fighting her battles; and, in return, we claim the rights of citizens; we ask you to restore them unto us. If we have violated any law, we are willing to suffer the penalties of that law. We also ask that our adversaries may, in like manner, be called to account. Do us justice; restore us to our rights; and the God of justice, mercy, and truth will reward you for your good deeds.

Signed, on behalf of the Mormon people, by

EPHRAIM OWEN, Jr.

STATE OF INDIANA, *Green county, December* 1, 1838.

We, the undersigned, have been intimately acquainted with Ephraim Owen, Jr., Esq., the writer of the foregoing; and we here unhesitatingly say, that he is a man of truth and veracity, and we also certify that such is his general character.

Given under our hands:

J. R. CAVINS,
THOMAS SMITH,
ISAAC BAKER,
THOMAS OWEN,
GEORGE LARNER,
WM. M. NORRIS,
JOHN B. KELSHAW,
J. D. LESTER.